

## Professor Abdulla Al-Hawaj wins the "Personality of the Year" Award

In a momentous occasion at the 9th International Conference of Arab Impact Factor, hosted by Abu Dhabi University, the Association of Arab Universities honoured Professor Abdulla Al-Hawaj, the Founding President and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Ahlia University in the Kingdom of Bahrain, with the prestigious "Personality of the Year" award.

The award, presented by Dr. Amro Salama, the Secretary-General of the Association of Arab Universities, recognised Professor Al-Hawaj's outstanding contributions to the advancement of scientific research and education in the Arab world. "This coronation is not personal as much as it expresses the great success of the Kingdom of Bahrain under the wise leadership of His Majesty the King of Bahrain in supporting the process of education and higher education", said Professor Al-Hawaj during his speech.

The conference, held under the theme "Scientific Publishing and Artificial Intelligence Challenges," brought together a diverse array of Arab academics, researchers, and experts to discuss topics ranging from journal classification, university rankings, and the applications of artificial intelligence in scientific



publishing.

"This honour also confirms the success of the esteemed government under the leadership of His Highness the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, especially the Ministry of Education and the Higher Education Council led by the Minister of Education, Dr. Mohammed bin Mubarak Juma, who shows every keenness to listen, guide, support, and give full confidence to all universities," added Professor Al-Hawaj.

Ahlia University was represented by an esteemed academic

delegation, led by Professor Al-Hawaj, University President Professor Mansoor Alaali, Acting Dean of Graduate Studies & Research Professor Mahmoud Abdel-Ati, and Dean of Student Affairs Dr. Faisal Al-Showaikh.

The 9th International Conference of Arab Impact Factor has served as a platform for scholars, thinkers, and researchers from across the Arab world to engage in discussions and share their insights on the evolving landscape of scientific publishing and the role of artificial intelligence in this dynamic field.



# Al-Hawaj: Expansion of the Award Highlights Government Support for the Media Sector

## Ahlia Students Win the Prime Minister's Award for Journalism 2024



In a significant achievement for Ahlia University, a group of media and public relations students won the "Prime Minister's Award for Journalism 2024". The award was presented at a prestigious ceremony attended by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, on Sunday, July 21, 2024, at the Four Seasons Hotel, Bahrain Bay.

On this occasion, Professor Abdullah Al-Hawaj, Chairman of the Board of Trustees at Ahlia University, emphasized the vital role of wise

leadership and governmental support in the success of the journalistic mission in Bahrain. He noted that the press faithfully and honestly reflects the nation's developmental achievements while conveying citizens' voices and opinions with credibility and objectivity.

Al-Hawaj highlighted the expansion of the Prime Minister's Award in its 8th edition to include university student projects as a clear indication of the growing governmental interest in the development of the journalism and

media sector. He praised the efforts of Ahlia University's students who won the student projects award. "We are delighted with the achievement of our media master's programme students," said Al-Hawaj. "It is even more gratifying to see a united Bahraini-Saudi team demonstrating the competencies and capabilities of our youth in the Gulf region."

He stressed the importance of student participation in various local, regional, and even international competitions, due to their significant positive impact on refining skills and

developing capabilities. Al-Hawaj pointed out that Ahlia University offers journalism and media studies at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels.

The winning students expressed their gratitude for the award and the continuous development of the journalism sector in Bahrain. Faisal Al-Zahrani, a master's student in media and public relations and the head of the participating team, noted that the Prime Minister's Award for Journalism is one of Bahrain's most important media initiatives over the past decade. He praised the award's role in honouring distinguished journalists and encouraging creativity and innovation in the media field. Regarding Ahlia University students' participation in the award, Al-Zahrani explained that several students applied their field experiences and academic knowledge to establish an e-paper named "Ahlia 24".

Saad Al-Bahri, a master's student, mentioned that since its inception, the competition has inspired his colleagues and positively impacted their performance and capabilities, leading to innovative and creative journalism. He highlighted that the 8th edition of this competition emphasizes excellence in journalism and ongoing media leadership, offering a unique opportunity for both students and professionals to showcase their talents and skills.

Halima Darwish, another master's student, describing the award as a cultural media incubator that enhances awareness of the true practice of journalism as a powerful tool for societal impact and a driver



Saad Al Bahri



Faisal Al Zahrani



Nasser Al Shehri



Fatima Al Ali



Halima Darwish



Sara Abdullah

of decision-making and change.

Master's student Fatima Alaali stressed that the Prime Minister's Award for Journalism provides an opportunity to develop and showcase journalistic skills. She highlighted that the collective participation of students nurtures teamwork skills, simulating real-world journalism practices.

Sara Abdullah, a master's student, shared her aspiration for achieving advanced results in the competition,

emphasizing the diligent efforts of all participating students. She noted her role in writing social articles and news stories in the women's and children's section.

Master's student Nasser Al-Shehri confirmed that Bahrain government's support for sciences and knowledge is exemplified by the Prime Minister's Award for Journalism 2024. He praised Bahrain's commitment to keeping pace with rapid developments in the field of communication.





## Ahlia University is Recognized for Nurturing Exceptional Saudi Students Talents

# Governor of the Eastern Province Receives Ahlia University Delegation and Award-Winning Students

## Empowering Youth: Al-Hawaj Commends the Wise Bahraini-Saudi Leadership



His Royal Highness Prince Saud bin Nayef bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Governor of the Eastern Province in KSA, and His Royal Highness Prince Saud bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Governor of the Eastern Province, welcomed Professor Abdulla Al-Hawaj, Founding President and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Ahlia University, accompanied by the University's President, Professor Mansoor Alaali, and the Saudi student winners of the "Prime Minister's Award for Journalism 2024".

Professor Al-Hawaj commended the keen interest and support shown by the wise leadership of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia towards youth and the education sector, considering it as the most valuable investment. He affirmed that Ahlia University is inspired by the developmental



journeys of the two Kingdoms in pursuing its own progress and innovation. Prof. Al-Hawaj explained that the award is one of Bahrain's most prestigious media initiatives, highlighting the award's role in recognizing exceptional journalists and encouraging creativity and innovation, including university media students. He also praised the impressive performance of Saudi students at the University, who formed the majority of the award-winning team.

The University President, Prof. Mansoor Alaali, noted that Saudi students constitute an important segment of the University's student body and are integral partners in its successes, whether in terms of academic quality or the institution's international rankings and accreditations.





# Minister of Labor Inaugurates Career Day at Ahlia University

Mr. Jameel bin Mohammed Ali Humaidan, Minister of Labour, inaugurated the 12th Career Day at Ahlia University, accompanied by the Founding President and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Professor Abdulla Al-Hawaj, and the President of the University, Professor Mansoor Alaali. The University welcomed and received students and graduates from various institutes and universities, with the participation of more than 70 ministries, institutions, and companies.



On this occasion, Professor Abdulla Al-Hawaj, emphasized that the presence and participation of Mr. Jameel bin Mohammed Ali Humaidan, Minister of Labour, in the inauguration of Career Day underscores the government's commitment, under the leadership of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to support all governmental and private efforts

aimed at providing the youth with suitable education, training, and employment opportunities.

Professor Al-Hawaj praised the efforts of the Ministry of Labour in empowering Bahraini youth, enhancing their skills, and providing them with dignified job opportunities that match their abilities and capabilities. He stated that the 12th edition of Career Day reflected the University's commitment to

linking its students and graduates with the labour market and its evolving needs.

Mr. Hussein Mohammed Habib, Director of Professional Relations at Ahlia University, confirmed that Career Day attracts many students and graduates, emphasizing that the University strives to introduce new elements to this event each year. Mr. Habib pointed out that the number of participating ministries,



institutions, and companies this year has exceeded 70, including public and private sector entities, such as government institutions, banking institutions, telecommunications companies, hospitality services, representatives from the retail sector, oil and industrial companies, and several vocational training institutions.



The Deanship of Student Affairs, through its Professional Relations Directorate, regularly organizes workshops and training courses focusing on professional aspects to equip the University's students and graduates from various specializations with the necessary skills to enter the labour market.





# Ahlia University Academics Earn Prestigious Fellowship from Advance HE



In a significant milestone for Ahlia University, 12 of the institution's esteemed academics have successfully obtained a fellowship certificate from the prestigious British Higher Education Academy - Advance HE. This achievement underscores the University's unwavering commitment to the professional development and continuous growth of its academic staff.

The fellowship was earned through an integrated programme of workshops and support courses organised by the University's Accreditation and Quality Assurance Centre, led by Dr. Esra Al-Dhaen, in collaboration with Training Unit at the Human Resources Directorate.

Professor Abdullah Al-Hawaj, the Founding President and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Ahlia University, said: "This is a testament to the caliber of our academics and the University's dedication

to elevating the quality of higher education. We encourage our faculty members to continuously develop their abilities and seek out opportunities like this fellowship to enhance their knowledge and teaching methods."

Professor Mansoor Alaali, President of Ahlia University, expressed his pride and congratulations to the academics who participated in the programme. "The skills and expertise gained through this fellowship will be instrumental in our ongoing efforts



to improve academic curricula, student performance, and the overall quality and efficiency of the University," he said.

Dr. Esra Al-Dhaen, Executive Director for Strategy, praised the academic's hard work and determination in obtaining the prestigious certification. She also confirmed that the University will continue to support and facilitate opportunities for additional faculty members to earn the fellowship from Advance HE.

# Ahlia University Prioritises Psychological Support for Students During Exams

In a proactive move to support student well-being, Ahlia University has made psychological assistance a top priority for students during the critical exam period.

Dr. Faisal Al-Showaikh, the Dean of Student Affairs, emphasised that providing a comfortable and supportive environment for students is a key responsibility of the University's Counselling Directorate. "We understand the immense stress and anxiety that students experience during exams, and we are committed to helping them manage these challenges effectively," he stated.

To this end, the Counselling Directorate organised a lecture titled "Proper Dealing with Psychological Stress During the Examination Period." Led by Ms.



Khadija Al-Awainati, a Clinical Psychotherapist, the session aimed to equip students with practical strategies to overcome psychological factors and maintain a healthy mind-set during exams.

Ms. Rasha Al-Najdi, the Director of Counselling, emphasised Ahlia University's unwavering focus on supporting the mental and psychological well-being of its

student body. "By addressing the root causes of exam-related stress and providing tailored assistance, we can help students achieve academic success and foster a truly supportive learning environment," she explained.

Ms. Khadija Al-Awainati elaborated on the various psychological factors that can impact students during the exam period. She stressed the importance of following stress management techniques, seeking advice from the University's counsellors, and maintaining a balanced mental state to enhance academic performance.

Ahlia University's proactive approach to student mental health underscores its commitment to nurturing a holistic educational experience. By prioritising psychological support, the University aims to empower its students to thrive academically while maintaining their overall well-being.





# College of Business and Finance at Ahlia University Achieves Prestigious International Accreditation from AACSB

Ahlia University proudly announced that its College of Business and Finance has been awarded academic accreditation from one of the most prestigious global accrediting bodies. This milestone was celebrated during a consultative meeting organized by the University, attended by Dr. Diana Abdulkarim Al-Jahromi, Secretary-General of the Higher Education Council, alongside numerous invited dignitaries, experts, and stakeholders.

Professor Abdulla Al-Hawaj, Founding President and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Ahlia University, emphasized that the University's achievements were a result of the unwavering support for higher education in the Kingdom of Bahrain. This support, spearheaded by Dr. Mohammed bin Mubarak Juma, Minister of Education and Chairman of the Higher Education Council, had enabled the University to secure academic accreditation for its College of Business and Finance after an extensive evaluation and review process. This accomplishment marked a significant leap forward for Ahlia University, which was committed to providing a high-quality educational system capable of competing both regionally and internationally.

Professor Mansoor Alaali, President of Ahlia University, highlighted that the University's strategic plan includes ten goals inspired by the Higher Education Council's strategies and the decisions of Ahlia University's Board of Trustees. One of the primary objectives is to advance scientific research. He elaborated that the strategy focuses on enhancing the



discovery and dissemination of knowledge through meaningful engagement in intellectual, scientific, and cultural fields based on modern research frameworks. Additionally, the strategy aims to deliver high-quality education that meets global standards and keeps pace with academic and professional advancements, contributing effectively to a vibrant society through excellence in supporting national and social development within the community partnership policy that

the University prioritizes.

Alaali also stressed that the strategic goals were designed to prepare students for the world of economy, enabling them to compete in both local and global job markets. This involved improving the quality of education by exposing faculty members to the latest expertise and fostering greater openness to the labour market. The University is committed to providing the best level of education for its students, encouraging them to rely on their



talents, and inspiring them to realize their potential. The success of Ahlia University's graduates, who are in high demand in the job market and in entrepreneurship, is a testament to this commitment.

During the event, Dr. Israa Al-Dhaen, Executive Director of Strategy, Quality, and Sustainability, along with Dr. Ammar Al-Hawaj, Executive Director of Communications and International Relations, presented an overview of the University's achievements in international accreditation and global relations. Dr. Lamea Al-Tahoo, a faculty member of the College of Business and Finance, discussed the University's strategies for graduating students who are well-prepared to integrate quickly into the labor market.

The event also celebrated a significant new achievement: The College of Business and Finance received international accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The accreditation certificate was presented to Dr. Diana Abdulkarim Al-Jahromi, who congratulated the University on this



accomplishment and wished them continued success. She emphasized that such achievements reflect the Higher Education Council's efforts to enhance the quality of education in Bahrain's higher education institutions, encouraging further collaboration with prestigious global universities.

It is noteworthy that the College of Information Technology at Ahlia University had previously earned

global academic accreditation for its bachelor's programmes from the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), a leading accrediting body for college and university programmes in applied and natural sciences, computing, engineering, and engineering technology. This accreditation serves as an international testament to the quality of the College, enhancing the competitiveness of its graduates in the job market.





# «Al-Watan» Interviews the Private Education Pioneer Al-Hawaj Calls for Bold Decisions to Encourage Investment in Education and Tech Manufacturing



Similar to any other economic sector, the academic education plays a significant role in boosting the country economic status. It has been considered an investor partner, as it now operates with established structures and principles. It offers returns and has its own set of guidelines, stakeholders, and responsibilities. At present, the academic institution is not just a mission-driven entity, or it is purely commercial or profit-oriented, instead, it serves as a valuable investment prospect for the private sector, a platform for deploying capital and business ventures, a hub for experts in various fields, and a center for cutting-edge research and advanced technology, as well as contemporary sciences and future-oriented studies.

“Al-Watan”, therefore, in an exclusive interview with Professor Abdullah Al-Hawaj, a key figure in Bahraini private education, discussed the topic of educational investment. As he is the Founding President of Ahlia University and chairman of Board of Trustees, Al-Hawaj has played a significant role in shaping this sector. Our discussion highlights his unique perspective, not just as an academic and one of the first to earn a PhD in Bahrain, but as the pioneer of the first private university. His vision for education was further solidified when he was appointed by royal decree, more than 23 years ago, to represent the education sector within the Supreme Committee for the National Action Charter.

**- You’ve often discussed how education should be a core component of the economy. After over 20 years of investment in academic education and with your experience as the Founding President of Ahlia University about 23 years ago, how do you see the current state of investment in this sector?**

1- have consistently emphasized the importance of investing in education. I still believe that education is a vital part of Bahrain’s economy, serving as a key driver for adding value, improving core outcomes, and supporting the national budget. Collaboration among various

institutions is essential, particularly those linked to education, such as immigration, tourism, and regulatory bodies such as the Education and Training Quality Authority and the Higher Education Council. These organizations work closely with the Ministry of Education to advance science and learning across both private and public universities. We’ve frequently discussed diversifying income sources, leading to the development of financial, banking, and insurance sectors.

Since the mid-1970s, Bahrain has established itself as a major global financial center, connecting the East and West and hosting numerous international financial institutions. Just

as we pioneered formal education in the region, we now play a central role in facilitating financial transactions between America, Europe, and the East. Our shift towards diversification became crucial when we recognized that oil is a finite resource. The true and endless wealth lies in ideas and human creativity, which are inspired not from beneath the earth but through a higher vision and the determination of those living in this land.

### Vision and Its Elements

- If you see a clear economic advantage in investing in education, what are the key components of this vision?

- Several factors make Bahrain well-positioned to become a leading center for knowledge, technology, and advanced education:

1. Diverse Educational Institutions: Bahrain hosts over 20 universities, serving a population of no more than 1.5 million.

2. Historical and Legislative Foundations: The country’s rich history and strong legislative support, along with local and international accreditations, offered for our universities, their programs, and curricula.

3. Innovative and Global Standards: The creativity in designing educational programs and aligning them with market needs is supported by world-class faculty, enhancing local academic standards to an international level.

4. Advanced Infrastructure: Bahrain offers a sophisticated information

● I am Against Eliminating Theoretical Colleges, “Wealth Lies in Humans Minds, True Innovation Comes from Within, Not from Earth’s Resources”

● Private Sector Should Be a Key Partner, Not a Minor Investor

● We Have a Golden Opportunity to Attract 20k to 30k New Students

● Al-Hawaj Urges for a Shift to a Knowledge-Based Economy and Local Tech Production

and communication infrastructure, open global markets, and regulatory frameworks that ensure regional and international recognition for our graduates’ degrees.

Causeway connects Bahrain with Saudi Arabia, expanding our reach and strengthening ties with the Gulf region.

5. Hospitality and Expertise: The welcoming nature of Bahrain’s people, combined with a high level of educational qualifications, creates a supportive environment for students. Additionally, the King Fahd

These components create a significant opportunity to attract 20,000 to 30,000 additional students from the region to Bahraini universities, potentially contributing over a billion dollars annually to the national economy. With the extensive







البروفيسور عبدالله الجوانح خلال حوار مع

number of universities and diverse programs available, meeting student needs is entirely achievable.

**Balance Over Elimination**

- Some voices suggest eliminating theoretical colleges. What's your opinion?

- Although some voices in the region call for the elimination of theoretical colleges, I believe balance is crucial. We shouldn't approach challenges by removing or canceling them. Instead, we need to foster a culture of balance, making thoughtful decisions and ensuring alignment when addressing sector-specific issues. Sometimes, issues should be resolved before considering more drastic measures. This approach helps us maintain a knowledge-based economy rather than one driven by randomness. I urge all relevant agencies to work on promoting Bahraini universities both regionally and internationally. We need to recognize the importance of our goals and develop a clear, actionable

plan with specific objectives and timelines. Bahrain has the potential to become a leading destination for educational tourism and a hub for knowledge investment. Eliminating theoretical disciplines is a mistake, as theory forms the foundation of knowledge itself. There must be a synergy between theory and practice, application and learning, as well as between traditional and innovative approaches.

**Bold Decisions**

- Is there real encouragement for the private sector to invest in education?

- There is no doubt that there is a strong motive for investing in education, with visible support and facilitation from decision-makers. However, as I've noted, we need bolder decisions to truly integrate the private sector as a key partner in both decision-making and execution. The government should act as a regulator and planner, developing strategies in collaboration with the

private sector, which would then be responsible for implementing them. The government monitors, while the private sector works diligently within the set regulations. This model has enabled advanced countries to make greater strides and helped struggling nations improve their conditions.

**A Golden Opportunity**

In the past, Bahrain pioneered formal education over a century ago and welcomed its first bank alongside its first formal school, Al-Hidaya Al-Khalifiya. Today, we have a prime opportunity to establish Bahrain as a leading hub for advanced education and regain our historic prominence among GCC nations. Bahrain is well-equipped with its strong infrastructure, supportive regulations, excellent living conditions, and outstanding universities. Moreover, Bahrain's high global ranking for quality of life makes it an attractive destination for students throughout the region.

**Promising Direction**

- If Bahrain is well-positioned to become a center for advanced education and private sector investments in this area are proving beneficial, do you support the idea proposed by the Bahrain Stock Exchange to list shares of private universities, even if they remain privately held for now?

- This is an excellent initiative, and I strongly support the idea of listing university shares on the Bahrain Stock Exchange. It would bring transparency to these institutions and reflect their true administrative,



academic, and financial status. I welcome the possibility of our private universities becoming public entities managed with an economic approach, accurately determining their market value and securing the necessary funding for growth and development of educational infrastructure.

**No Harm, No Foul**

- Do you support the idea of establishing independent research institutions, such as a national research center outside universities or a center focused on knowledge and modern technologies?

- Absolutely, there is no downside to having public, private, or joint research centers, whether inside or outside universities. I also support

Bahraini universities playing a national role similar to how Korean institutions helped "Hyundai" recover through transformative and innovative research, significantly improving its global market position. We encourage scientific research and researchers in our universities, where we have experts who match or surpass their global peers. However, this also requires supportive legislation and effective regulations. Creating and localizing knowledge production should be achieved throughout following a clear protocol and well-structured guidelines.

**Localization of Knowledge**

- You've emphasized the importance of producing and localizing knowledge rather than relying on imports. Is this

achievable, and what are the necessary conditions?

- Moving from being consumers of knowledge to producers is feasible due to the large number of internationally accredited universities we have. I am proud of this, particularly with institutions like Ahlia University, which has globally recognized experts, including the top mathematician of 2023 according to recent Chinese evaluations, as well as renowned Arab researchers from Bahrain and the region, in the fields of management, finance, IT, and FinTech. Additionally, Ahlia University has published around 150 peer-reviewed articles in international journals within a year. Such progress can help elevate Bahrain to a prominent scientific and economic position.



## In Cooperation with Silwan Psychiatric Hospital Ahlia Provides Psychological Support for Students with Special Needs



In a collaborative effort between Ahlia University and Silwan Psychiatric Hospital, the University hosted a lecture by psychiatry consultant Dr. Amani Al-Sabbagh, aimed at improving support for students with special needs.

The lecture, organised by Student Counselling Directorate, covered a range of topics related to special needs, including fear, forgetfulness, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and physical disabilities. Dr. Al-Sabbagh emphasised the importance of fostering positive psychological attitudes, facilitating social interaction, and encouraging community participation for these students. "It's crucial that we create an environment that is understanding and empathetic towards the needs of students with special needs," said Dr. Al-Sabbagh. "By identifying and addressing their mental health challenges, we can better support them in reaching their full potential."



The University's commitment to inclusivity is evident in its various support initiatives. Students with special needs, as well as orphans, outstanding students, and creative students, are offered partial scholarships covering 50% of their tuition fees. "Our goal is to ensure that all students, regardless of their unique circumstances, have the opportunity to excel in their academic pursuits," said Ms. Rasha

Al-Najdi, Director of Counselling at Ahlia University. "We work closely with these students to help them unlock their talents and succeed throughout their studies."

The lecture was well-received by the academic and administrative staff in attendance, who expressed a renewed understanding of the importance of providing comprehensive support for students with special needs.



## Issa Al Ainawi Takes Helm of Ahlia University Football Team for Upcoming University Championship Season

In a strategic move aimed at reclaiming their spot at the top, Ahlia University has appointed Bahraini coach Issa Al Ainawi to train their football team for the forthcoming "University Football League" season.

Al Ainawi, alongside his assistant Ahmed Janahi, signed the contract in a ceremony attended by Professor Mansoor Alaali, President of Ahlia University, Professor Abdulla Al-Hawaj, Founding President and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and several faculty members and students.

Professor Abdulla Al-Hawaj emphasized the University's ambition to return to football glory, highlighting the talent and potential of Ahlia University's students. He expressed gratitude for the championship, initiated under the patronage of His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, Representative of His Majesty the King for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs, and Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports.

Al-Hawaj praised Al Ainawi's experience, affirming the importance of sports in the daily lives of university students. He reiterated the University's commitment to fostering a sporting culture that serves the nation and enhances



students' futures.

Professor Mansoor Alaali highlighted the University's dedication to nurturing student talent and developing well-rounded graduates with both academic and athletic skills.

Coach Issa Al Ainawi vowed

to spare no efforts in training the team, saying: "I promise to fulfil my commitment and give my best effort. You must commit to training and cooperation to achieve victory and the championship". He also expressed his gratitude to the University Management for their trust.







# “Al-Ayam” Interviews the Private Education Pioneer, Navigating a New Era **Al-Hawaj: Upholding His Majesty’s Summit Initiatives is Our National Duty**

The semester we recently concluded was far from ordinary. It was filled with events and programs that embraced the future, blending cutting-edge knowledge with forward-thinking initiatives. It was a time that made us pause at the finish line, not just to reflect on our journey but to prepare for new, unexpected paths ahead. As the second semester ended and the academic year drew to a close,

like always, “Al-Ayam” brings with it a moment to review the past, reflect on the present, and anticipate the future with hope for what lies ahead.

Today, we speak with the visionary leader, Private Education Pioneer, Founding President of Ahlia University and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Professor Abdullah Yousif Al Hawaj. He is a man who has proudly showed the world that Bahrain invests in education and that its success comes from within.

## **“A New Beginning Rises from an End”**

**- The end of the academic year 2023-2024 felt like an old cinematic tale—where one chapter closes and another begins. How did the year wrap up, and how did it start? Did it meet your expectations?**

-Without a doubt, the beginning of the 2023-2024 academic year was like a well-planned endeavor, not a stumbling start. There’s a vast difference between a deliberate approach and one that struggles to take shape. We began the academic year last September at Ahlia University with high hopes for achieving a better position in global rankings, and our efforts paid off as we secured the 651st spot globally. This is just one step in our larger vision to be among the top 500 universities worldwide by 2030.

We’ve also made significant progress in other areas, such as advancing in global education standards and contributing to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, alongside securing international accreditation in Information Technology, Business and Finance. With this momentum, we embarked on the next phase, armed with new programs that pushed us to the forefront in various fields. We launched innovative courses designed to meet the recent demands of the labor markets and the pervading digital transformation. Our Master’s in FinTech, for instance, fills a gap in previous offerings, while our Master’s in Forensic Accounting, Nutrition Science, and Physiotherapy, along with our PhD in Digital Media and Communication Technology, position us as the first Arab University to offer such programs. This reflects our

commitment to addressing the needs of both the students and society, demonstrating that with the right vision, nothing is beyond reach for decision-makers or for those aspiring to achieve their goals.

## **“Personality of the Year”**

**- You have recently received the “Academic Personality of the Year Award” from the Association of Arab Universities in Abu Dhabi, which is a significant recognition that complements the international honors you’ve garnered. How did it feel to receive such a prestigious acknowledgment?**

- First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to God for allowing me to witness this moment. It’s a culmination of over 45 years in academia—years that are difficult to summarize in numbers or

broad headlines. In a way, I see this recognition as a kind of “life’s work reward.” The honor from the Association of Arab Universities was awarded based on the efforts I’ve shared with distinguished colleagues in the often challenging academic landscape. It also reflects the success we achieved in founding the first private university in the Kingdom of Bahrain, one of the first of its kind in the region. The idea for this institution began over thirty years ago, and this award is an additional badge of honor that I wear with pride, dedicating it to our beloved Kingdom, its leadership, government, and people. This achievement would not have been possible without the steadfast support, resources, and encouragement from our wise leadership. They created an environment where our dreams could flourish. My heartfelt thanks go to everyone who stood by us,

**His Majesty’s Initiatives, A Ready-to-Launch National Development Project**

**Global Accreditations Unlock New Horizons for Graduates**

helping us turn this vision into a reality. I am also grateful to those who eased the path for us, allowing us to break new ground and contribute to placing our country on the global map as a center of knowledge and enlightenment for the entire Gulf region.

## **“Innovative Initiatives and the Arab Summit”**

**- As the 2023-2024 academic year came to a close, in sync**

**with the recent Arab Summit held in Bahrain. The initiatives presented by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa were widely praised, especially those focusing on the importance of FinTech, information technology, and modern sciences as key to achieving sustainable development. How do you view these forward-thinking proposals?**

- These visionary initiatives



from His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa were a breath of fresh air at the conclusion of the Arab Summit. His Majesty sent a powerful message to leaders and intellectuals in the region, stressing the importance of advancing our sciences, arts, and culture. His call for increased Arab cooperation in cutting-edge fields—particularly in technology, FinTech, and the broader information revolution—shows the dedication of His Majesty, the government, and the people of Bahrain to driving progress and modernizing national institutions. His vision makes clear that we must keep pace with the digital age and leverage artificial intelligence to further sustainable development, making these technologies available to academic, knowledge, and production institutions. If we truly aspire to build a solid foundation of scientific knowledge that can help solve our challenges and address urgent developmental, intellectual, and cultural issues, then we must spare no effort or resources in ensuring we become creators of progress, rather than simply consumers of it.

**“National Committee to Activate Historic Initiatives”**

- Recently, the Cabinet, under the leadership of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, decided to establish a committee to implement the initiatives proposed by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa at the Arab Summit.

**Education,  
Tech, and  
Fintech .. Our  
Top Priorities**

**What is your view on this decision, and what do you think it aims to achieve?**

- This decision couldn't have come at a better time. Throughout the history of Arab summits, we've seen many important resolutions and recommendations made, but often they are left unfulfilled. We've long waited for actions that align with the hopes of the Arab people, yet many of these ambitions have remained unrealized. Thankfully, during this Arab Summit—held under highly critical and unprecedented circumstances—Bahrain displayed remarkable awareness and readiness. As a nation, led by its leadership, government, and people, we came together in recognizing the urgency of addressing the region's significant risks and challenges. This unity has strengthened our resolve to confront the dangers that lie ahead. His Majesty the King introduced bold initiatives and shared his vision for the future of the Arab world, posing key questions: What are the obstacles to achieving our collective goals? How do we tackle the humanitarian disaster in

Gaza and Rafah, the mass killings, and the forced displacement of Palestinians? His Majesty swiftly responded by proposing an international peace conference for the Middle East, with the aim of securing global guarantees for the Palestinian people's right to a dignified life. This includes ending the war, establishing lasting peace, and creating a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, as part of the “two-state solution.”

**“Initiatives and Sustainable Development”**

- On the development front, His Majesty's initiative clearly stressed the importance of education and integrating FinTech into academic curricula to ensure continuous, sustainable growth, rather than sporadic or reactive progress. Can you share your thoughts on this?

- This is exactly what I wanted to emphasize, and it's what has inspired so many. His Majesty's initiative, presented to the Arab leaders, reflects the dreams we have long held and hoped to achieve. It embodies the voice of the people, the aspirations of a nation, and the vision for a brighter future. The initiative is a clear directive to focus on modern sciences and education, essential for finding effective solutions to our challenges and addressing our complex economic issues in a scientific way. The timing of His Majesty's initiative is ideal, as we, as educators and as a robust educational system, have already

**■ Bahrain's Consistent Commitment to Arab Issues**

**■ Past Year Full of Challenges, but a Brighter Future Awaits**

**■ Rejecting the Myth: AI Won't Lead to Higher Unemployment**

begun integrating advancements that enhance our academic fields. At Ahlia University, for example, we have introduced FinTech into our programs, alongside cutting-edge information technologies, artificial intelligence, and future forecasting algorithms. This places us at the forefront of institutions that are combining technological innovation with academic learning. The initiatives put forward by His Majesty, along with

the Cabinet's decision to form a committee to implement and oversee them, will guide us into a new era—one that we've long strived for. We may not have realized how close we were to achieving these dreams, but now it's clear that every great achievement starts with a vision, and



**«Personality  
of the Year»  
Award .. My  
Honor Tribute  
and Award to  
Bahrain**



# Ebrahim Khalil Kanoo Company and Ahlia University Sign Memorandum of Understanding to Enhance Cooperation



Ebrahim Khalil Kanoo Company and Ahlia University signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation between the two entities. The signing ceremony took place during the visit of a delegation from Ahlia University to Ebrahim Khalil Kanoo's headquarters. The delegation was led by Prof. Abdullah Al-Hawaj, the Founding President and the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Prof. Mansoor Alaali, the President of Ahlia University, and Mr. Hussain Habib, the Director of Professional

Relations.

The Ebrahim Khalil Kanoo team, including Mr. Mike Brightmore, the CEO of the company, and directors from various departments, welcomed the University delegation.

"This partnership with Ahlia University represents an important step in our ongoing commitment towards developing and enriching our team and their families," said Mr. Mike Brightmore. He added: "Through this agreement, we not only invest in their educational

future, but also strengthen the bridge between the academic sector and the business community, ensuring a strong foundation for growth and mutual success."

Professor Abdullah Al-Hawaj, the Founding President of Ahlia University, emphasised the importance of such joint cooperation between the educational sector and the labor market, stating that it will enable students to acquire the necessary skills for the workplace.